



## Close helmet with bellows visor

### Date

portions 1500s, assembled and decorated in 1800s

### Primary Maker

Northern Italian

### Medium

steel and brass with leather

### Description

Close-helmet is skull of 2 parts, apparently a reworked early burgonet (cf. Wallace Collection A.89). Upper half of 1-piece, level with tops of ears, pierced at temples for visor pivots. Decorated with embossed diamond bossets, themselves etched with a scale-

like motif. These are set in rows of 2, 3, 4 ascending toward comb. Low comb, pierced at apex with keyhole-shaped slot, decorated with foliate arabesques within single line borders. Sunken bands on skull between rows of embossings bear traces of a similar etched design. Base of skull bears etched bordered arabesques and cusped trilobate designs, and is fitted with lining rivets. Lower half of skull at neck is formed from a piece of old metal embossed in a fashion similar to the skull. In addition, this bears an etched warrior (all'antica) on the nape area. On proper right of this is an etched scene of an enthroned male, with a supine female at his feet. Below this is etched "CESAR". At the base of this plate are traces of another foliate pattern. Lower nape defense of 1 lame, reworked to attach to lower half of skull, secured by two brass rivets, also securing retaining straps. Upper edge of this is pierced for rivets, now missing. Several other holes, some worn, some punched. Proper right interior edge repaired with riveted patch. Bevor belongs with visor and associated with skull. Of one piece, with defined chin (worn through), indistinct traces of etching. Restored pivot-hook on proper right. Pivot terminals at proper left repaired with riveted patch. Facial opening fitted with four lining rivets. Lower edge of bevor fitted with associated, restored gorget lame, not visible in 1911 catalogue. This lame etched similarly to other components, and has an inwardly flanged plain border, with traces of etched arabesques. Skull composed of a top-plate, back-plate, and rear neck-plate riveted together; a visor and bevor attached to the skull assembly by pivots, the bevor having a solid neck-plate riveted to its bottom edge. The piece is decorated with Italian-style modern engraving overall, now largely obliterated by overcleaning. Only the crest-plate of the skull and the bevor appear to be authentic, and even these have been heavily reworked. The TOP PLATE OF THE SKULL is ridged in a vaguely Maximilian style, with pyramidal protrusions scattered somewhat unevenly on the ridges, which are broad and flat; the decoration appears to be inspired by the della Rovere armor (Boccia and Coelho 1967: pl. 223 ff.). There is a large, irregular hole at the top, conceivably deriving from use as a mortuary piece. There is also a pair of holes on either side of the occiput, and two additional holes above and behind the ears on each side, suggestive of strap-holes, but not symmetrically placed. There are traces of slipshod etching overall; the brow retains the etching most intact. Along the sagittal line is an angular ridge different from the flat ridges on the rest of the surface. Inside the brow are eight externally-flush rivets that appear to have secured an internal leather strap, with a ninth rivet apparently pulled out. Behind these are the holes for the visor/bevor pivots; these appear to be slightly asymmetrically positioned relative to each other. Just below and in front of the pivot hole on the left side is an additional hole that could be a previous pivot hole; there is a slight notch in the edge of the piece at the corresponding position on the right side, which could be the matching hole. About an inch and a half in front of this notch is another notch of indeterminate origin. Along the rear bottom edge of the plate are seven rivets securing the back-plate of the skull; all but the outermost two are of brass and fitted with washers. On each side there is an additional hole, about ¾ in behind the notch and hole suggested as being prior pivot-holes. Overall, the strap-rivets at the brow and the apparent trueness of line that seems to underline the reworking suggest that this is an original skull-piece, probably with its back-part removed for the purposes of the present restoration. The BACK PLATE OF THE SKULL is secured to the crest plate by five brass rivets, and by an additional iron rivet with external washer on each end. There are four rectangularly-arranged holes just above the nape, in a position to suggest the former presence of a plume-holder. Outside of the lower two are four externally flush rivets roughly arranged in a horizontal rectangle. This plate bears the same flat ridging, pyramids, and etching as the crest plate. At the extremes of the bottom edge are two rivets that secure the rear neck-plate as well as the strap and buckle to hold the bevor in place. Just above this rivet on the left side are two small holes, one of which is partially obscured by the neck-plate. Around the rivet on the left side is a patched repair. The various unexplained holes in the piece suggest that it may be old metal that has gone through other purposes before the present one. The REAR NECK-PLATE overlaps the backplate of the skull, and is secured in place with modern brass rivets with decorative flower-shaped washers; these rivets also secure the straps for the bevor. In addition, there are

seven empty rivet-holes running between these rivets in a slightly irregular arrangement. There are also a number of other irregularly arranged holes on the outward flare of the piece, four on the left side in a vaguely trapezoidal arrangement, four in a line below the nape of the neck, with a fifth below and at the left end of these, and another below and to the right of them. The right extremity of the plate is a patched repair. The metal appears old, but there has been a good deal of reworking, and the final execution as part of the present helmet is quite shoddy, and its condition is poor. The VISOR is associated to skull; ca. 1500-15 (cf. to Milanese work #683, p. 9, item 33; # 721, p. 10, item 34 in Odescalchi Collection, and 6.8, 9, H.45 in Musée de l'Armée). Of one piece, with transverse fluting, forming a "bellows" form (alla Tedesca or Spanish market; W.C.L. A.153), with a single sight. It fits poorly to both the skull and bevor. The left side is generally thinner than the right, suggesting reworking at some point. A lifting-pin is on the right side of the bellows, and below it, at the edge of the visor, is a staple to receive the securing-hook. The upper edge of the visor is very thin in the center and left side, and overall it is slightly irregular in line; at its central point is a deep V-shaped decorative notch. The lower edge of the sight has been hammered back to form a ledge. There are traces of etched decoration running across the upper edge, above the sight, and in the area of the bellows. The etching has been largely obliterated by overcleaning; it appears to be rather crude, and of modern workmanship. The absence of breaths suggests inferior modern manufacture.

Fractured at cusped medial point on brow. Proper right fitted with restored lifting peg and securing eye for pivot hook. Indistinct traces of double helix and arabesque foliate decoration. The BEVOR is associated with the skull and belongs with the visor. Of one piece, with defined chin (worn through), indistinct traces of etching. Obtusely fitted to the chin. To the right side of the chin is riveted a hook to secure the visor. On either side of the face opening, at jaw-level, are two flush rivets with washers. Below these, on the right side, is an empty rivet-hole, just above the current visor-hook. Below this level are two more holes, one now occupied by the visor-hook, and the other by a rivet with a washer securing a fragment of what appears to be leather. Aside from the hook-rivet, all of these rivets are externally flush. On the left side, matching the rivet with leather on the right side, is a similar rivet that may also have leather trapped under its washer. At the left-pivot hole is a small reinforcing plate secured by rivets; the metal on this side of the bevor is markedly thinner and more uneven than on the right, with some cracking and holes plugged by the reinforcing plate; it would appear that like the visor, this side of the bevor has been heavily reworked. There is also a large patch just in front of the visor-hook, and some cracking just at the tip of the chin, with some signs of work. The bottom edge of the bevor flanges sharply outward; on the flange are two brass rivets securing either end of the neck-plate, and a row of seven additional washered rivets securing a modern leather strip (also secured by the brass rivets). There are traces of etched decoration on the bevor's back edge, around the face opening, and intermittently visible along the line of the jaw. The right side of the bevor is executed with some precision and skill. Overall, the bevor has the look of a genuine element, but has been substantially reworked, particularly on the left side. The FRONT NECK PLATE is secured by two brass rivets, leaving a slight degree of play. The bottom edge has a decorative ridge, and above it there is an etched border. The overall execution of the element is crude, and obviously modern.

### **Dimensions**

27 x 21 x 21 cm (10 5/8 x 8 1/4 x 8 1/4 in.), 5 lb 1 oz (weight)